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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 10 December 1990, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. de MARCO	(Malta)
later:	Mr. FLEMMING (Vice-President)	(Saint Lucia)

- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 35 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/45/595, A/45/709 and A/45/726)

Mr. JAYA (Brunei Darussalam): The Middle East has long been a volatile and unstable region. A prime cause behind this apparently complex and most disturbing state of affairs was mentioned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, in his statement to the General Assembly last October. His Royal Highness stressed that specific regional problems are often the deep-seated cause of a wider conflict. In the case of the Middle East the specific regional problem is the long-standing confrontation between Israel and Arab nations. A just and lasting solution to this problem has not been achieved, despite its having been on the agenda of this noble Organization for the last 45 years.

We noted with deep regret and grave concern that progress towards a peace settlement continued to be hindered by Israel's intransigence and denial of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination without interference, their right to return to their homeland and their right to establish an independent State of Palestine.

Israel's continued presence in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and the Golan Heights constitutes illegal occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories. We condemn Israel's persistent pursuit of its Greater Israel policy in annexing these Arab territories in defiance of the United Nations Charter and of international law.

The Israeli authorities cannot hope to eradicate or suppress the intifadah, because in its essence it expresses the struggle of nationalism. To this end, I would like to reiterate Brunei Darussalam's full support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to exercise their apposite inalienable rights and our recognition of an independent State of Palestine.

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

Israel's policy of accepting mass emigration of Soviet Jews has exacerbated the situation in the occupied territories. We contend that this will not only change the demographic composition of the occupied territories but also further increase tension and the chances of violence. In the past few months, violence in the occupied territories, including the killings of Palestinians by Israeli authorities, have given conclusive support to this contention.

Israel has also attempted to destroy the Palestinians' efforts to create a communal economic structure. This has not only complicated the search for a political solution but has also caused a setback to the United Nations efforts to rebuild the Palestinian society. In this regard, Brunei Darussalam supports the international efforts in calling for the immediate lifting of Israeli restrictions and obstacles hindering the implementation of projects by the United Nations agencies that provide economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

The core problem in the Middle East situation is and has always been the Palestinian question. In your own words before the Assembly, Mr. President:

> "The Palestinian question has a dimension that goes far beyond the occupied territories. It creates rancour, soul-searching, prejudices and, unfortunately, also hatred. It has the capacity of distorting events and of destabilizing regions and continents." (A/45/PV.1, p. 12)

The international community therefore should not be deterred from striving to find a just and lasting solution to the problem. In this context, I would like to reiterate Brunei Darussalam's firm belief that a just and comprehensive solution to the problem can only be achieved through the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on an equal footing, as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

In expressing my country's concern over the situation in the Middle East, I would also like to touch on the issue of the Iraqi invasion and annexation of another Islamic country, Kuwait. The invasion further intensities the already problematic and tense situation in the Middle East. It shows once again the fragility and volatility of the region and also the vulnerability of small States. As a small country which depends primarily on international law for its protection, Brunei Darussalam condemns such action, which violates the United Nations Charter and international law. In this regard, Brunei Darussalam supports the United Nations efforts to resolve the Gulf crisis by calling upon Iraq to fully comply with United Nations Security Council resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions. It is our hope that a peaceful solution will prevail in which the sovereignty and the legitimate Government of Kuwait will be restored. Another war in the Middle East will undoubtedly result in grave consequences, not only to that region but to world peace and the global economy.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, we have noted several recent developments in Lebanon. One encouraging development is the decreasing presence of militia gunmen in Beirut. We hope that Lebanon will soon achieve its national reconciliation on the basis of the Taif Agreements. At the same time, this body should continue to assist Lebanon to regain its full independence and its full sovereignty. Furthermore, in accordance with the 1989 armistice agreement, foreign troops must withdraw from southern Lebanon. Without such an undertaking, stability, security and peace will not prevail.

In conclusion, it is our fervent hope that with renewed optimism, with our reinvigorated United Nations and the newly found sense of collective security demonstrated by the United Nations, particularly by the Security Council over the Gulf crisis, the question of Palestine, with its manifold and complex ramifications, will be addressed more urgently now.

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

We have celebrated the long-awaited birth of Namibia. We rejoiced and hailed the historic moment of the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela. We hope that before the end of this century we can also celebrate the birth of a new State of Palestine.

Let us hope that the winds of change which are sweeping many parts of the world will not bypass the region and the Palestinian people.

Mr. GARAD (Somalia): The General Assembly is once again seized of the critical situation in the Middle East, which not only continues to be fraught with possibilities of explosion and instability in the region, but has all the potential of being a real threat to international peace and security.

A new dimension has been added to the already volatile situation in this region with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. As I address this Assembly, ominous clouds of an impending war have gathered over the area, threatening to plunge the world into a major catastrophe unless saner and wiser counsel prevails in the days to come.

In the course of his report on the work of the Organization (A/45/1), the Secretary-General rightly described the Middle East as a whole as the most explosive region of the world today. It is regrettable that the gravity of the situation in the Middle East should continue to increase in spite of the winds of change in the world and the positive global spirit which have contributed to, among other things, the settlement of a number of internationally significant regional issues over the last three years, thereby strengthening the role of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General, in his report on the question of Palestine, drew attention to the absence of any diplomatic process aimed at overcoming the obstacles to an effective negotiating process in the Middle East. It is unfortunate that although the international community has reaffirmed the urgent and

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(Mr. Garad, Somalia)

imperative need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict, through successive General Assembly resolutions on the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, no progress has been possible in this direction because of Israel's intransigence.

While deploring Israel's arrogance, which is solely responsible for the present impasse in the peace process in the region, we reject its untenable charge of terrorism against the Palestine Liberation Organizatic., the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It is well known that the PLO is committed to peace on the basis of the United Nations resolutions on the Middle East and Palestine. Israel has conveniently forgotten that the Palestine National Council, by resolutions adopted at its special session held at Algiers towards the end of 1988, and subsequently the Palestinian leadership, by various declarations and statements, have affirmed their sincere desire for peace by committing themselves to the acceptance of a peaceful solution of the problem on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The international community has consistently supported the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all the parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. Such a conference will therefore provide the necessary legal and political framework for negotiations leading to a just and comprehensive settlement of the problem that would result in Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to establish a State of their own in Palestine, and in respect for the right of all the States of the region to live in peace and security.

(Mr. Garad, Somalia)

The glorious uprising, intifadah, of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza, is an eloquent reminder that peace cannot be achieved in the region unless the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are fully restored. The entire world is shocked at the brutal repression to which Israel continues to resort in the occupied territories in order to suppress this spontaneous uprising. What is more, in the face of international outrage against its violation of human rights in the occupied territories, Israel has time and again rejected proposals for a United Nations team to visit the areas concerned.

In his report to the Security Council, last month, the Secretary-General gave a graphic account of the harrowing conditions under which the Palestinian people in the Israeli-occupied territories are compelled to live:

> "... Palestinians have expressed a profound feeling of vulnerability at all times, whether in the workplace, at school, in places of worship or simply walking down the street. This fear was compounded by their view that there was no recourse to any authority, other than the security forces who were so often responsible for the measures inflicted upon them. They have stated that they felt unsafe even inside their homes, which were frequently subjected to midnight searches, and during which entire households, including children, were beaten. It was said that arrests during such operations were common. A wide range of collective punishments had, they said, become routine during the past three years, such as curfews, the demolition of homes, administrative detention and the uprooting of trees." (S/21919, para. 19)

(Mr. Garad, Somalia)

In his report, the Secretary-General clearly indicates how helpless is the international community today in trying to deal effectively with this tragedy of our time, when he states:

> "The issue before us today is what practical steps can, in fact, be taken by the international community to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians living under Israeli occupation. Clearly, the numerous appeals - whether by the Security Council, by myself as Secretary-General, by individual Member States or by ICRC, which is the custodian of the Geneva Conventions - to the Israeli authorities to abide by their obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention have been ineffective." (S/21919 and Corr.1, para. 24)

Another dimension of Israel's threat, not only to peace and stability in the region but to international peace and security, is its possession, and unregulated capability of producing, weapons of mass destruction. This has been duly reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/435) on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

It is evident that in spite of the wind of change and the positive spirit in the world today, to which I referred earlier, the drift of events in the Middle East is not towards the understanding and compromise that alone can usher in lasting peace in the region. The Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization, stated that

> "In the long run, lasting peace will come to the Middle East only when the principles of international law govern the relations between States, when disputes are resolved through peaceful means, when the aspirations of those deprived of their rights have been fulfilled, and regional security and economic arrangements - which take into account the concerns of all the parties in the area - have been established." (A/45/1, p. 10)

(Mr. Garad, Somalia)

Unless, therefore, we redouble our efforts to bring about justice and legality in the prevailing conditions in the region, the already precarious situation in that area is bound to deteriorate, posing even more dangerous threats to regional and world peace and security. We therefore urge all the parties concerned to use the framework for peace provided by the United Nations, which we firmly believe will contribute to the just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, thereby ending once and for all the suffering and agony of the Palestinian people and bringing to the countries in the region the benefits of peace, security and stability that they have long been denied.

Mr. MOHIUDDIN (Bangladesh): A little over a year ago, when my delegation addressed the General Assembly on this same topic, we said that we were meeting on a matrix of hope. The same condition no longer obtains. Sadly, the situation in the Middle East has deteriorated enormously since then. Today we have but to look beyond the rim of the saucer and we will perceive the moving clouds of grave danger and perhaps hear the thunder of war. The issue is undoubtedly complex, but, unless we cut the Gordian knot of its intractibility, the slide into the morass of disaster will be inexorable.

It is not for nothing that the Secretary-General has described the Middle East as "the most explosive region of the world today" (A/45/1, p. 10). A dangerous arms race, heightened confrontation and the increased intransigence of Israel have all interacted to create a highly untenable situation that is utterly unacceptable.

We still believe, however, that there is no need for total despair. We draw hope from an emerging consensus in the global community that the world must stand up to oppression, that aggression is not to be rewarded, and that forcible occupation of the territories of others should be resisted with all the might at its command. Israel must draw a significant lesson from these developments. Nations are ready to fight and die for values that Tel Aviv appears to ignore.

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

We need not wonder what is to be done. We are aware of what lies at the core, at the centre, of so crucial a matter. It is undoubtedly the question of Palestine. Palestine is more than a painful story of the travails of a dispossessed people; it has become a symbol of struggle that finds manifestation in the glorious intifadah. By legacy, law and legend, Palestine belongs to the Palestinians. What is rightfully theirs and has been wrongfully taken away must be restored to them.

In our resolutions we have stressed time and again that Palestine lies at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East, that peace in the Middle East is indivisible and must be based on a comprehensive, just and lasting solution under the auspices of the United Nations, and that no such peace is possible without the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We have reiterated, and we do so again, that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, must be able to participate in all relevant deliberations, including the proposed peace conference, on an equal footing with other parties.

To create the appropriate environment for peace, Israel must immediately, unconditionally and totally withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. Lebanon must be left in peace, the peace that she has been denied so excruciatingly and for so long. Jerusalem, the Holy City of the great faiths of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, must not continue to be occupied and desecrated by being made a bargaining chip.

As if the persistent sorrows of the Middle East were not enough, we have recently witnessed another man-made tragedy in the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq. Our stance on the issue has been unequivocal. Once again we appeal to Baghdad to heed the resolutions of the Security Council. We welcome the recent initiative on contacts and hope that it comes to fruition and produces positive results.

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

In his endeavours in the quest for peace in the Middle East the Secretary-General has our fullest, most complete support. We are totally with him in his efforts to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the problems of that region.

To those who treat the urgings of the Assembly with scant respect, I suggest that ours is not just the voice of the world, but also that of reason. The Holy Books are replete with examples of countries that have come to naught because of their inability to read the writing on the wall.

Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia): Despite the intensive efforts of the United Nations for over four decades, a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict remains elusive and the situation in the region continues to be unstable. Recent events have further highlighted the urgency of finding an equitable solution to this seemingly intractable problem.

The persistence of the conflict, however, cannot be ascribed to the Organization, which since its inception has played an indispensable role in facilitating armistice agreements, dispatching peace-keeping forces, extending humanitarian relief, and above all formulating the essential components of a political solution. Rather, it is the untenable policies and actions relentlessly pursued by Israel that have thwarted all endeavours and led to a virtual stalemate.

As events during the past year have once again demonstrated, the occupying Power has persisted in its policies of expansion and oppression, its provocative defiance of the will expressed by the international community, and its intransigent flouting of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Compounding the situation are new dimensions of violence and the reign of terror in the region, which have rendered any hope for meaningful negotiations exceedingly remote. These developments have also evoked widespread anger and bitter despair among the inhabitants of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Holy City of Jerusalem, and have triggered an escalating spiral of violence and counter-violence. Thus, the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the unresolved Palestinian issue at its core, has moved inexorably from one crisis to another, creating in its wake ever more obstacles to the restoration of peace and tranquillity in that volatile region. Yet, through all these years of trials and tribulations, Palestinian nationalism has emerged stronger and deeper, resulting in the radical transformation of the strategic and political dimensions of the conflict and in a qualitatively different situation in the occupied territories.

(Mr. Sutresna, Indonesia)

In the midst of a rapidly deteriorating situation in the Middle East, it is gratifying to note that, after more than a decade and a half of strife and turmoil in Lebanon, normalcy has been restored and the process of national reconciliation has gone forward. But the question of Lebanon continues to be an integral part of Israel's designs to establish a permanent military presence in southern Lebanon, just as it is attempting to do in the occupied territories. Indonesia has in the past condemned the illegal occupation through the illegitimate local forces Israel has set up as surrogates under its control, and we have supported the resistance movement of the Lebanese people to liberate their country. The sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon must be restored, while the authority of its Government and the effectiveness of its army must be enforced throughout the country.

Long-festering grievances, aggression and occupation, annexation and dispossession, as well as suppression of national aspirations to freedom, independence and national sovereignty have all made the Middle East the most explosive region in the world. Israel's systematic attempts to remove the people from their land have been met by the unyielding determination of the Palestinians to remain in their land. The leaders of Israel have missed far too many opportunities to achieve peace because of their steadfast refusal to recognize the rights to self-determination, equal rights and justice for all peoples.

My delegation would have liked to believe that there is still a measure of hope and that Israel will realize that it is in its best interests to reach a settlement based upon certain long-standing and fundamental principles, including the non-acquisition of territory by force and the observance of international treaties and conventions. But as those expectations have been belied, Indonesia and the vast majority of Member States have become increasingly concerned over the dangerous course of events and fully convinced that the vital interests of the

(Mr. Sutresna, Indonesia)

peoples of that region, as well as the interests of international peace and security, urgently call for the resumption of collective efforts to achieve a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In this regard, the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East has assumed paramount importance, as it offers the only practical and realistic approach to dialogue between the parties concerned, including the PLO. The universal demand for the convening of a conference is a tacit recognition of the fact that a comprehensive settlement can be reached only through negotiations involving the one international machinery that we have collectively created for that very purpose, the United Nations. Only multilateralism can assure an open dialogue on all relevant issues relating to the Middle East problem, without prejudice to the interests of the parties involved, and agreements concluded at the conference will acquire universal legitimacy if implemented in a manner acceptable to all parties. Immediate steps should therefore be taken to set up a preparatory committee, with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council, as a first step towards the holding of the conference.

We hope that the new spirit of co-operation among them, which has become increasingly evident in their concerted endeavours to resolve various conflict situations peacefully, will also characterize the Arab-Israeli dispute. The era of the cold war has come to an end and, in the context of the need to chart a new and universally accepted world order, it is essential that more concerted efforts be made to overcome the unresolved conflict situations that have plagued the international community for so long.

Finally, my delegation shares the forebodings expressed by many Member States that a prolonged delay in seeking a durable solution to the endemic Middle East conflict is fraught with incalculable consequences. We also believe that a

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continuation of the status quo will be detrimental to the interests of all the parties concerned, especially the Palestinians. The situation has been further complicated by Iraq's invasion and declared annexation of Kuwait. A solution to the crisis will have a salutary impact on the Middle East as a whole and provide the necessary impetus for an accord on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The recognition of Palestinian rights is the central requirement for a just and durable peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours. It is therefore imperative that Israel join the global consensus and engage in a serious search for peace. And it is more urgent than ever on the part of all Member States, and especially of the members of the Security Council, to fulfil their responsibility and move decisively forward with concerted efforts leading to a comprehensive, just and peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict.

Mr. ELIASSON (Sweden): Not for a long time has the situation in the Middle East appeared as critical and complex as it does today. The region now balances on the brink of disaster. It is a paradox that at a time when international relations are going through fundamental and positive change, when the cold war is over, when respect for human rights and democratic values is being enhanced and when millions of people around the world renew their hopes for a better future, the situation in the Middle East is more explosive than ever.

Since ancient times the Middle East has been a region plagued by crisis and conflict. Its geographical location, its historic and religious heritage and its strategic importance have all contributed to this state of affairs. A powerful wind of positive change has swept across Central and Eastern Europe, affecting other parts of the world as well. But it seems to have left only scant ripples in the shifting sands of the Middle East. As the experience of the process of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) has shown with regard to that continent, deep-seated conflicts can be overcome through confidence-building and other innovative approaches.

Inadequate democratic traditions and respect for human rights are important problems in the Middle East today, further complicating the search for security and co-operation in that region. One country in the area, Israel, prides itself on its democratic institutions and political freedom. Its democracy does not, however, extend to the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The way they are treated does not testify to a genuine sense of democratic or human rights values in those who are responsible for their safety.

The most urgent and the most explosive conflict in the region is of course Iraq's aggression against Kuwait, where Iraq now faces a united world community. Iraq's occupation and purported annexation of Kuwait represent flagrant violations of the United Nations Charter. Not only has a sovereign country been overrun by

(Mr. Eliasson, Sweden)

armed force; this unprovoked aggression also threatens the whole Middle East region and the emerging new, and more hopeful, world order.

Many countries have been directly affected by Iraq's treatment of foreign nationals in Kuwait and Iraq. To hold foreign nationals against their will cannot be tolerated. The unity of the international community in its condemnation of Iraq is crucial. Sweden fully supports the Security Council in its efforts to make Iraq leave Kuwait unconditionally. Sweden has, for its part, implemented all sanctions against Iraq decided by the Security Council. We have also allocated considerable financial resources and provided humanitarian assistance to countries and people affected by the conflict. Should Sweden be requested by the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, to provide further assistance, we are ready to respect such requests. The Security Council resolutions regarding the Iraq-Kuwait question must be fully implemented without delay. It is vital that aggression not be rewarded.

We welcome the opening of a dialogue between the United States and Iraq. A dialogue of this kind may open the way to a peaceful solution, in conformity with the Security Council resolutions and with international law. The withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait will have to be followed by arrangements for security and stability in the region.

An end to the crisis in the Persian Gulf would improve the possibilities for a solution to other conflicts in the Middle East, which have for so long evaded all efforts to reach a settlement. The search for a solution of the acute Iraq-Kuwait conflict must not allow us to neglect the old conflicts. Year after year in the Assembly we have had to face the fact that the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights as well are still occupied by Israel. Year after year Sweden has appealed to the Israeli Government to declare openly in the Assembly that Israel

(Mr. Eliasson, Sweden)

has no intention to acquire and to remain in the territories taken by force in 1967. Again, I renew this appeal.

Israeli troops are also present in southern Lebanon. Syrian troops still remain in major areas in that country. The tragic situation in Lebanon continued to deteriorate for many years. The Swedish Government welcomes the recent developments towards peace and reconciliation. The Lebanese Government must now be given a fair chance to fulfil its task of restoring full sovereignty and independence, unity and territorial integrity through national reconciliation and non-interference from abroad.

Historically, the most intractable conflict in the region remains the Palestinian question. Lasting peace in the area cannot be reached until this problem has been solved. To say that is not to accept the claim of so-called linkage, but to state a fact. In order to establish lasting peace in the Middle East all occupation must cease. As soon as the solution of the acute crisis in the Gulf has been achieved, the international community should concentrate fully on the other urgent problem in the region.

The Swedish Government strongly supports Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries. This does not, however, imply uncritical acceptance of Israel's policies. We are deeply concerned about Israel's policies and practices, including serious human rights violations in the occupied territories. Only a just solution to the question of Palestine and acknowledgement of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, including the right to establish its own State, seems to offer a chance for preventing the threatening escalation of violence.

The Palestinians today need hope for a better future, hope that a just, peaceful solution can be found. But they also need protection while waiting for

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the peace process to produce results. Sadly, we have to note that the peace process has been stalled. Frustration has taken its toll on both sides. The intifadah is now entering its fourth year. Around 1,000 Palestinians have been killed since its beginning in 1987. The high toll among children is frightening: more than 200 children have been killed. The increased religious tensions between Moslems and Jews have further escalated the violence between the two communities.

The most serious recent event was the massacre by the Israeli police on the Temple Mount on 8 October. The Swedish Government joins in the world-wide condemnation of the excessive use of force by the Israeli police. That event and the following eruptions of violence demand measures by the international community for monitoring and for the protection of the Palestinian people. The Swedish Government supports the Secretary-General's suggestion that a meeting be convened with the high contracting parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a party.

The Swedish Government concurs with the overwhelming majority of Member States which consider that the best way to promote the peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict would be the convening of an international peace conference in the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations. Such a conference should be convened with the participation, on an equal footing, of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In closing, let me say that the Israeli Government must understand that stability and security, including a safe haven for tens of thousands of new immigrants, can never be achieved through domination or through the use of force. We must all recognize that a lasting, comprehensive solution can be obtained only through political means.

Mr. STEIN (United States of America): Today I want to address the general and continuing aspects of the singularly important issue of peace and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The commitment of the United States to the search for peace between Arabs and Israelis remains a major part of our foreign policy. We are committed to a practical process that offers a real possibility of achieving peace in the Middle East. We have worked on this issue for many, many years. The disengagement agreements following the 1973 war, the Camp David peace process and the peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel are clear indications of the fact that this issue can be dealt with successfully and creatively. Our goal continues to be a comprehensive peace settlement.

We all know that there are many obstacles to an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. We have worked hard to overcome them. The existence of Kuwait has never been such an obstacle, but the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has created yet one more problem in the path of finding a just, secure and realizable peace in place of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Secretary Baker said recently,

> "Saddam did not invade Kuwait to help the Palestinians; he did it for his own self-aggrandizement."

Ironically, it is Iraq's policy of aggression that is a paramount obstacle to resolution of the Palestinian issue, notwithstanding Iraq's professed desire to resolve that problem. As explained by Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, "You do not enslave one people to free another."

For over two decades the United States has been committed to a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the last year and a half we have held particularly intensive discussions with all the parties involved. Assisted by friendly partners, we have focused on the practical approach of direct negotiations as a means of bridging the differences. This practical approach to getting such negotiations started has included work towards a dialogue between

(Mr. Stein, United States)

Israelis and Palestinians and an electoral process in the occupied territories. Today our approach remains based on the key principles which we believe can provide a solid foundation for an equitable settlement.

First, the objective in these negotiations is to achieve a comprehensive settlement. Such a settlement must be put together through a process of negotiation based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which are broadly accepted by all the parties to the negotiations. These negotiations should thus involve the exchange of territory for peace, security and recognition for Israel and for all the other States in the region, and the attainment by the Palestinian people of their legitimate political rights.

Because of the enormous complexity of moving immediately to a final settlement, a second principle should guide the negotiations. It will be necessary to move through a transitional period so that the parties can adjust to each other, build the confidence and trust required for a durable settlement, and continue the negotiating process necessary to arrive there. The final status settlement is the over-arching objective, however, and no transition can be a substitute for that.

Thirdly, the final settlement will be shaped by the negotiations between the parties. It cannot be dictated by any party in advance. It must be based on the Security Council resolutions to which I have referred. In this regard, the United States has not supported the creation of an independent Palestinian State in the occupied territories, just as we cannot support annexation or permanent Israeli control over those territories.

The development of principles alone is not sufficient to move parties forward. The conditions must be created to sustain viable and ongoing negotiations. The gaps that currently separate the parties and prevent them from getting to the table are wide, and the mistrust is deep.

(Mr. Stein, United States)

In dealing with this situation, an approach is required that will break the current cycle of deepening confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians. We should like to see that cycle of confrontation replaced by a political process that will improve the situation in the occupied territories and bring about a positive change in the parties' views of one another.

In that regard, we have supported, and continue to support, the idea of free and fair elections as offering a practical pathway to this end. We welcomed the Israeli Government's initiative of May 1989 in this regard. We have worked for many months in an attempt to achieve such objectives. While elections are not the end of the pathway to a solution to the problem, they offer a practical means of launching a political process that could lead to negotiations.

In this regard, the tragic cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza continues to carry with it not only a bitter legacy of confrontation and mistrust but also a major impediment to opening up the process of negotiations. This is why we have expended so much time in encouraging Israelis and Palestinians to try to open the doors to a practical dialogue. Such a dialogue could not only make the possibilities of an electoral process more realistic but also assist in reducing the barriers that now stand in the way of a process of negotiation. We remain convinced that negotiations must take place between Israel and all its neighbours if a full and comprehensive peace is to be achieved, and we strongly support the desire that has been expressed by many in the region to see this occur.

On both sides the choice is clear. Open-mindedness and flexibility will be necessary if problems are to be overcome. Help and co-operation from all the States in the region will be necessary. The ending of states of belligerency and recognition of Israel are important steps that can be taken as the process moves

(Mr. Stein, United States)

forward. Recognition of the human rights of individuals under occupation and full adherence to the Fourth Geneva Convention would also make a constructive contribution to de-escalating the confrontation and providing an atmosphere for the constructive work ahead.

Having made all these points clear, I must say that it is a source of great disappointment to my Government that Saddam Hussein should seek to link, in some fashion or other, his unprovoked aggression against a peaceful neighbour with the need to solve the Palestinian problem. There is absolutely no justification for this. Indeed, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait has seriously set back the possibilities of progress within the region towards dealing effectively with the Arab-Israeli dispute, rather than moved them forward.

(Mr. Stein, United States)

What the Iraqi presence in Kuwait does do is to complicate the situation in the region. No one in the United Nations is prepared to take the position that Iraq must be rewarded by steps on the question of Palestine somehow or other either for its aggression against Kuwait or for its returning the situation to the status quo. To do so, would be a travesty and a perversion of the United Nations Charter and its fundamental principles. The linkage which Saddam Hussein wishes to try to establish is not only unpersuasive but completely illegitimate. In doing so he has made it more difficult, rather than less difficult, to deal effectively and continuously with the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Not only should there be no reward for his aggression by accepting his demands to link a solution to the Palestine issue and the resolution of the Persian Gulf crisis, but, if anything, his blatant and perverse actions have distracted international as well as Arab attention from the search for practical steps to solve the Israeli-Arab conflict, including the Palestinian question.

The path that Saddam has chosen through his invasion of Kuwait is clearly wrong. Brutal and unprovoked aggression against a Member State of the United Nations will do nothing to improve or resolve the problems of the Middle East. Linkage is a blatant attempt to blur the focus of unprovoked aggression and should not be accepted. Those who promote this argument only seek to shift the blame for the problems of the Gulf when it is quite clear who has caused them and should resolve them.

The situation of the Palestinians is a great concern to us. We have publicly stated and demonstrated our position in favour of the Secretary-General's efforts to improve their situation. We are all working together to reverse the course of Iraqi aggression so that we can get back fully and completely to the critical work of achieving a comprehensive settlement.

Mr. VORONTSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): Against the backdrop of the positive trends towards resolving complex pockets of tension, the stark drama of the situation in the Middle East is particularly evident, embodying years and years of the building up of distrust, enmity, counter-claims and division. Despite the efforts made at different times, including efforts made by the United Nations, so far it has been impossible to break the chain reaction of negative build-up in that region, to curb the dangerous processes that continue uncontrollably, leading to new pockets of conflict arising and an exacerbation of old ones. The most tragic thing of all is that conflict has become a fact of life for the peoples of the Middle East. For several generations of Palestinians, Lebanese, other Arabs and also Israelis, acts of violence, armed acts, suffering and death have become daily occurrences.

In our statements in the plenary meeting of 3 December and in the Security Council on 5 December we stated our views on the present exacerbation of tension in the territories occupied by Israel and decisively condemned the new wave of repression by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people. The Soviet Union calls upon Israel immediately to put an end to its punitive acts and lawlessness.

It is also a fact that the failure to resolve the conflict between the Arabs and Israel, and the failure to resolve its key element, the Palestinian aspect, poses a serious threat to universal peace and security. As was stressed in the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Mr. Shevardnadze, in Vladivostock in August this year, "Until peace comes to the Middle East we will all pay an enormous price for its wars."

The lack of any real movement towards resolving the Middle East situation has produced fertile ground for a further growth of feelings of confrontation and extremism.

(Mr. Vorontsov, USSR)

The task of finding a just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem is one of the priority goals of Soviet foreign policy. We are convinced that lasting peace will come to the Middle East only when relations between States are governed by the norms and principles of international law and disputes resolved by peaceful means, when the rights of peoples are attained, and security is guaranteed for all States of that region.

The main point, here, we feel is movement away from mere rhetoric to practical steps to convene an international conference on the Middle East with the participation of all interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization and the permanent members of the Security Council. I wish to stress that the Soviet Union has insistently and consistently addressed the issue of the conference for a number of years now. Back in February 1989, in the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Mr. Shevardnadze, in Cairo, a comprehensive approach on how to improve the situation in the Middle East was set forth, including in particular reactivating efforts to convene a Middle East conference.

We continue to be convinced that the development of the peace process in the Middle East is possible on a basis that offers a variety of choices, and we are prepared to support any constructive proposals, including transitional ones, pending the attainment of a comprehensive settlement.

With that aim in mind, the Soviet Union intends to co-operate energetically with all interested parties - Arabs, Israel, the United States, Western European States and indeed all that cherish peace in the Middle East. In this regard, the statement by the President of the Security Council of 30 November 1990 is extremely important. He stressed that:

(Mr. Vorontsov, USSR)

"the situation in the Middle East as a whole continues to be potentially dangerous and is likely to remain so, unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached." (S/PV.2964, p. 3)

The Soviet Union continues to believe that the United Nations, given its authority and peacemaking potential, must play a leading role in establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The basic decisions taken by the United Nations on this problem are still valid as a generally acceptable political and legal framework for the settlement. Their great importance is clear because they reflect the broad international consensus that has emerged on basic principles for a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem. Those principles are the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Arab territories occupied during and after the armed conflict of 1967; exercise of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, just as that right would be ensured for the peoples of Israel; the creation of conditions for the peaceful and secure existence of all States of the region within internationally recognized borders; respect, in relations between them, for the principles of equality, equal security and non-interference in internal affairs, respect for their political independence and sovereignty; and non-use of force in resolving conflicts.

(Mr. Vorontsov, USSR)

We fully share the conclusion in the report of the Secretary-General to the effect that

"a negotiating process will only be effective if it involves all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, and aims at a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination". (A/45/709, para. 7)

As everybody knows, the recent attempts to revive the political dialogue, which were made possible by the flexible and constructive approach of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership, have invariably come up against the uncompromising position adopted by Israel. Recent statements by certain Israeli leaders that Jews have the right to settle "on the lands of Israel from the Mediterranean Sea to the River Jordan" are not conducive to defusing an already tense atmosphere. The short-sightedness of this policy is clear; unless there is a true balance of interests, unless there is co-operation and partnership in resolving common problems, no State can have any guarantee of security.

We believe that if Israel were to heed the voice of reason and agree to the convening of the international conference on the Middle East, there could be a great breakthrough towards a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in the interest of all the peoples living in the region, including, of course, the people of Israel.

We are particularly concerned by the relentless militarization of the Middle East, the fact that it is becoming saturated with particularly destabilizing types of weaponry, including ballistic missiles and chemical weapons, and the fact that a number of States are coming ever closer to obtaining the nuclear option. The international community is quite right to be concerned that the continuance of the

(Mr. Vorontsov, USSR)

arms race could plunge the Middle East into a new spiral or rivalry, with unforeseeable consequences for both regional and international security.

An important condition of a stable settlement in the Middle East is the establishment of a dialogue on reducing military capabilities to the level of reasonable sufficiency, building confidence and, in the longer term, setting up an integrated system of inter-State co-operation based on stable bilateral and multilateral machinery. In the opinion of the Soviet Union such major steps as the transformation of the Middle East into a zone free of nuclear, chemical and other types of weapons of mass destruction, the curbing of the arms race, including that in missiles and missile technology, and the establishment of a United Nations regional centre on the reduction of the danger of war would be helpful in putting these ideas into practice.

Iraq's aggression against Kuwait has dealt a serious blow to the efforts to solve the Middle East problem by peaceful means. In an instant the first fragile threads from which the structure of a future settlement in the Middle East was beginning to be woven were broken; in an instant, attitudes of defiance and confrontation once more gained the upper hand.

Our view of the situation was set forth in detail in the statement by the Foreign Minister of the USSR, Mr. Shevardnadze, to the Security Council on 29 November, and there is no need to repeat it here; I should just like to share the thought that, as Mr. Shevardnadze said,

> "we should continue what we have been doing ... : seeking a path towards a comprehensive settlement of the whole complex of Middle East problems that existed prior to 2 August. That is not rewarding anyone; it is just sound policy ... ". (S/PV.2963, p. 93)

(Mr. Vorontsov, USSR)

In conclusion, I wish to stress that the Soviet Union is prepared to continue in the future to make a constructive contribution to international contacts on the Middle East problem and to co-operate actively with all the parties, the United Nations and its Secretary-General in the interest of making true progress towards a Middle East settlement.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): The year 1990 has been a truly remarkable one. We have witnessed dramatic progress towards democracy, peace and national reconciliation in many parts of the world. Old rivalries are being forged into new relations of friendship and co-operation.

One region that has seemed immune to the contagion of peace and reconciliation, however, is the Middle East, where deep-rooted rivalries continue to consume the energies of the Governments, the resources of the land and the spirit of the peoples. In view of the generally encouraging developments that are unfolding elsewhere in the world, the lack of progress towards peace in the Middle East is all the more distressing.

The issue that is uppermost in our minds today is, of course, the situation resulting from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait last August and Iraq's subsequent proclamation that it had annexed that country. Iraq's acts of aggression, unprecedented in the post-war era, contravene established rules of international law. Japan reiterates its condemnation of Iraq's actions and calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the restoration of the sovereignty and independence of Kuwait, and freeing of foreign nationals now detained in Iraq to return to their home countries.

Japan supports every one of the resolutions which the Security Council has adopted in response to this crisis, including, most recently, resolution 678 (1990), which authorizes the international community to use all necessary means

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

to effect Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. My Government supports this resolution, but not from any bellicose impulse; Japan has no desire to see a war waged against Iraq, a country with which until recently it enjoyed very friendly relations. Rather, it does so in the profound hope that the resolution will convince Iraq that it has no recourse but to heed the voice of the international community.

Japan insists that every effort should be made to settle conflicts peacefully, and it thus heartily welcomes the dialogue between the United States and Iraq. My Government urges Iraq's leaders to recognize that they now have what may be the final opportunity to prevent a conflagration which would have disastrous consequences not only for Iraq but for the entire region.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

For its part, Japan is contributing to international efforts for the restoration of peace and stability in the Gulf region by providing transport, a medical team, other materials and equipment, as well as financial support, to the multilateral forces in the Gulf and also by extending economic support to those States in the region that have been severely affected. Deeply concerned about the many refugees that this conflict has generated, Japan is providing them with material assistance as well as aircraft to assist in their repatriation.

Japan welcomes the Iraqi announcement to release all hostages and allow them to leave the country as they wish. Japan had repeatedly expressed its particular concern over the plight of the many foreign nationals detained in Iraq, especially those used as so-called human shields who once included more than 100 Japanese nationals. The Iraqi leaders should be aware that those who have been held hostage were good friends of Iraq with business, cultural, political or economies ties to the Iraqi Government and people.

The year 1990, encouraging as it has been elsewhere in the world, has also been disappointing in that we are once again obliged to take up the question of Palestine, an issue of perennial concern. Unfortunately, as I noted in my statement on this question last month, little significant progress towards a solution has been made since the ground-breaking meeting of the Palestine National Council in 1988, when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) indicated its acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), its recognition of Israel's right to exist, and its renunciation of all forms of terrorism. This year, however, dialogue between the United States and the PLO came to an abrupt end and no progress was made towards a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian people. Japan hopes that serious efforts will be resumed by all the parties concerned to initiate, as a first step towards a comprehensive settlement,

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. The Government of Japan joins other Member States that support and encourage such efforts. At the same time, my Government believes that convening an international conference on this issue would help promote negotiations for peace.

Last year, following the Taif accord, the Lebanese Parliament elected Mr. Elias Hrawi as President of the Republic, demonstrating that the people of Lebanon are committed to working together to restore peace and democracy to their country. Since then, however, the national reconciliation process has not proceeded as smoothly as we had expected. Japan once again appeals to all sectors of the population as well as to foreign countries concerned to support President Hrawi so that the unity, independence and sovereignty of Lebanon may be restored.

The situation in southern Lebanon continues to be volatile. It is imperative that we pursue more vigorously the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanese territory, the restoration of international peace and security and the re-establishment of the Lebanese Government's effective authority in the area.

Lastly, I should like to comment on the situation between Iran and Iraq. Although the issue has been overshadowed by recent events in the Gulf, my Government welcomes the steady implementation of Security Council resolution 598 (1987). Japan is pleased to note that, while Iran is implementing that resolution, Iran is also committing itself to observing Security Council resolutions relevant to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, including calls for comprehensive economic sanctions.

In this discussion of some of the myriad problems of the Middle East region, I do not mean to imply that efforts to find peaceful solutions to the conflicts are not being made. I note and deeply appreciate the dedication with which the United

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Nations, the League of Arab States and a number of key United Nations Member States, as well as the parties directly involved, are striving to bring peace and stability to the region. Moreover, the series of resolutions which members of the Security Council adopted, either unanimously or by an overwhelming majority, in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, as well as to Israel's use of force in the occupied territories, is indeed an encouraging manifestation of the era of co-operation that is developing in the global political arena. This unprecedented spirit of co-operation bodes well for the enhanced role of the United Nations in international affairs. Although the situation in the Middle East is discouraging, the new era of international solidarity gives us cause for optimism. Let us all redouble our efforts to ensure that the countries and the peoples of the Middle East likewise reap the benefits of the more peaceful and stable order that is evolving in other regions of the world.

Mr. AL-NI'MAH (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): Once again the Assembly meets to debate the situation in the Middle East. It does so this year in an atmosphere of increased tension in the region at a level such that the obstacles that are before our region would appear insurmountable. It would seem that there is no solution that would promise any improvement in the situation. None the less, in today's world there is cause for hope, which may be only a glimmer. It seems that the Middle East is a region destined to bloody conflict, failures and futile endeavours. Our region has suffered a setback because of the ambitions of the State of Israel, which refused to remedy the situation or seek a solution.

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

That entity has persisted for far too long in its systematic and progressive designs. It has failed to heed anyone and turned its back on everyone. It claims it is complying with the international will while at the same time it goes on imposing one fait accompli after another. Following on the heels of its occupation of the Arab territories, it proceeded to annex those territories. It annexed the Arab city of Al-Quds, the Golan Heights and parts of southern Lebanon. On the West Bank, it unscrupulously built a series of settlements without any hesitation.

It continues its plan of expansion relentlessly using for this purpose all forms of force, coercion and brutality. It practices oppression and violence against the Palestinian people, thus wreaking havoc. It lends a deaf ear to the international community and will listen neither to advice nor to the voice of reason.

Given such an attitude, the Palestinian people has, like other Arab States, appealed to the international community. It has promoted justice and fairness and has called for security and peace in the region. The General Assembly and the Security Council have adopted a series of resolutions to ensure the rule of law and the observance of the dictates of legality in dealing with the Palestinian people - a people that has been the victim of the Israeli policy, which has practiced tyranny and has realized its ambition for expansion.

The rights of the Palestinian people are natural and inalienable. Foremost among those rights is the right of return, which has been reaffirmed for a long time by this Assembly in numerous resolutions that are known to all. The rights of the Palestinian people have been trampled under foot, but they are kept alive in the conscience of mankind and in the determination of the Palestinian people to regain them.

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

The Palestinian people has the inherent right of self-determination, the right to independence and the right to national sovereignty in Palestine. This can only be accomplished through Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupied by force, in violation of the principles of the Charter and of the resolutions of the United Nations. In spite of the recognition by the international community, all these rights of the Palestinian people and in spite of all the concessions made by the Palestinian side, in the hope that the international community would help it to find a reasonable solution, Israel has not been satisfied. The Palestinian people has accepted resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council. It accepted the existence of two States in Palestine. But all of these concessions were not enough for Israel. Thus Israel persisted in its delaying and deceptive tactics by placing obstacles in the way of attempts to arrive at a peaceful settlement.

Am I not right to wonder how long we will accept this situation? Are we doomed to accept such misfortune in this day and age? Is it not enough that the Palestinian people has sacrificed so many human lives? Are we not a people that have contributed throughout history to civilization? I am indeed perplexed.

Israel is taking advantage of the current events in the Gulf. Are we to confine ourselves to contemplating the clouds on the horizon? An Arabic brother - of whom we were proud, a country in which we placed all hopes for making Israel redress its mistakes - that brother turned against a smaller and younger brother. We ask Iraq to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and to commit itself to that compliance. If it does so, it will again be able to contribute to the Arab nation and that contribution will be added to its earlier contributions.

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

We will then be able to thank it for having helped heal our wounds. Thus in spite of all our tribulations we will become united, undivided and whole again.

One must question Israel's intentions. We see it annexing Al-Quds and the Syrian Golan Heights. It insists on calling the West Bank Judea and Samaria. It establishes Israeli settlements by the hundreds. New Jewish immigrants are settled there in defiance of the international will, which is reflected in the numerous resolutions adopted by the United Nations. Those resolutions shed a revealing light on the depths of the Israeli-Arab conflict and the rights of the Palestinian and Arab peoples.

There is one fact that cannot be denied: until Israel withdraws from Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories occupied since 1967, it will be impossible for peace to prevail in the Middle East. If Israel does not recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right of self-determination, and the right to establish its own independent State on its territory all attempts at a settlement in the Middle East will fail.*

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* Mr. Flemming (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

As long as it does not recognize the Palestinians as a people with the right to their land, there will be no acceptable solution. Throughout the past years, we have witnessed an increase in Israeli ambitions. Those ambitions not only involve Palestinian lands. A large part of Lebanon has also been occupied under false pretexts, which only served as a guise for Israel's true intentions, to control the water resources of southern Lebanon. The Security Council asked Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in southern Lebanon, but Israel continues its occupation. Lebanon, which has been shaken by internal conflict, wishes only to live in peace and tranquility.

The Israeli occupation of that southern territory has further worsened the destruction of the economic and social structure of Lebanon. There is no sign today that Israel really wishes to withdraw from the occupied Lebanese territory in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council. The efforts of the Arab States have combined to try to rescue that country from its tribulations. Thus, we adopted the Taif Agreement last year to put an end to the disastrous suffering of that country. The principles agreed upon at Taif were but a beginning for a series of events that have followed. We hope that this will help put an end to the plight of Lebanon.

My delegation, in this respect, pays tribute to the efforts made by the new Government to unify the country and to reconstruct the new Lebanon. We also support the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) which is trying to have Israel end its non-compliance with all the resolutions of the Security Council. Lebanon's determination over the years makes us proud of Lebanon, which, in spite of all hardships, somehow, as if by magic, manages to survive. The hand of Lebanon is indeed a magic hand. It gives us cause for hope and also shows that Lebanon has always had a humanitarian spirit. This was shown in the alphabet given

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

us by Lebanon, which will remain eternal. We should draw upon the wealth of Lebanese wisdom. The Lebanese efforts must bear fruit. Lebanon has brought civilization to all of us and it is up to us to draw from it. May God preserve Lebanon.

It is a country which constitutes a treasure that is rich in moral values, values of truth and beauty. Lebanon will be restored in a framework of understanding and fraternity, which will reconstruct all that was destroyed, so that Lebanon can continue on its chosen path, to accomplish works of the spirit and of art. What Lebanon has already accomplished will remain eternal. Beauty will be further embellished and become purer yet and more subtle.

We will witness a world of security, of peace and of tolerance. The evil in Arab land because of the expulsion of Palestinians, because of the suffering of the Palestinian people under oppression, that evil has been increased since Israel's occupation of the Golan. That is why we demand today that Israel withdraw from the Syrian Arab Golan because by its continued occupation of the Golan and of all the other Arab territories, the region's peace and stability will remain at risk.

We support the work of the disengagement forces established by the United Nations until Israel's withdrawal from the Golan and all other occupied Arab territories. This will make it possible to achieve a just and peaceful settlement to the Middle East conflict. We also appeal to the countries and the international organizations concerned to spare no effort towards that end. We hope that their efforts will be successful and that the region will experience peace and security, and that its inhabitants can live in tranquillity free of any threat.

The elements of a just and equitable solution to the question of the Middle East are available. We must make use of the climate of understanding prevailing in international relations. Israel must give up its designs and expansionist

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

projects. This can only be done through its withdrawal from the Golan and from all occupied territories. Israel must end its brutality against those who resist its illegal occupation. Israel knows full well that it is the only entity which is obstructing peace and a settlement. A just settlement also requires the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East and a combining of international efforts so that the peoples of the region can live in security. Israel's aggression and the fact that it has been inflicting suffering and tribulation on our brethren in occupied Palestine makes their life a bitter one, indeed, a difficult one. There is more suffering day by day and distressing hardship. In the midst of all this they struggle valiantly and the flame of the intifadah burns brighter from one day to the next.

This is true in spite of all the daily suffering in Palestine. This being the case, should we not encourage this international Organization to be ever more watchful in respect of this situation which clouds the region? The people of Palestine must, after all its suffering, be able to live in peace. It is high time it did.

Mr. MOUSSA (Egypt): The Middle East is the cradle of the major civilizations of the world. For one reason or another, those civilizations share parts of their history with that of our region. Their cultures have, directly or indirectly, been influenced by the diverse cultural heritage of the region - the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity and Islam - and the rich source of invaluable contributions to the development of the arts and sciences.

Today the Middle East remains the focal point of the world. Regrettably, the focus on the region recently has not been, as in the past, a result of its genius and unique role in our mutual endeavours for the betterment of mankind. On the contrary, it is the focus today because of the threats posed to the contemporary world order by events in the region as tensions heighten and problems become more intransigent - the developments in Lebanon being the sole positive element.

Ironically, this change comes at a time when the world is moving from confrontation to dialogue, from totalitarianism to democracy, where the rule of law and respect for human rights and liberties should reign supreme.

The cradle of civilization is being violently shaken, to its very foundations, in total disharmony with its surroundings. The Middle East not only has become an anomaly in today's world, but is in such a tenuous state that it threatens to disintegrate and adversely affect the emerging world order.

This unnatural circumstance, these precarious developments are the consequence of the tensions that have prevailed in the area for over 40 years as the Arab-Israeli conflict has gone from one violent armed conflict to another, each one containing additional elements of division that have widened the scope of the problem. Initially a conflict over the quest for nationhood in the land of Palestine, its dimensions have been enlarged to include expansionist designs as

(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

Israel continues to occupy Palestinian, Syrian, Jordanian and, finally, Lebanese territories, as well as to disregard blatantly the basic human rights of the people under its occupation, particularly those of the Palestinian people.

The resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict must be based on the rule of law and compatible with the widespread consensus of the international community. Consequently, its resolution through a negotiating process encompassing all the concerned parties should lead to the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), fulfilment of the national rights of the Palestinian people and equal security for all States, including Israel, and for all people, including the Palestinians.

The United Nations has an invaluable role to play in this regard, and an international peace conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, should be convened to address the problem on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the exercise by the Palestinian people of the rights enshrined in the Charter - first and foremost the right to self-determination.

The Arab-Israeli conflict - the core problem in the Middle East - has festered over the years, fueling tensions and hatred among the peoples of the region. Recently those tensions and problems have been exacerbated by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. This blatant violation of all the norms of international law - in particular, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations - has brought the region to the brink of catastrophe.

The international community has responded to this aggression with resolve and determination through a series of Security Council resolutions affirming that this situation must be redressed urgently in accordance with international law and legitimacy through, first, the immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait; secondly, the restoration of the legitimate Government of Kuwait; and, thirdly, the

(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

resolution of any disputes or claims between the two States, Iraq and Kuwait, through negotiations.

Furthermore, the international community, in its quest for a peaceful solution to this most recent crisis, has underlined that Iraq bears full responsibility for its actions and that the world is determined to uphold the rule of law if the body of resolutions adopted by the Security Council is not fully complied with.

Egypt fully supports the resolutions of the Security Council in this regard as well as the developments since the adoption of Security Council resolution 678 (1990). Hopefully, they will lead to the peaceful resolution of the crisis and the restoration of law and order in the Gulf region.

It has been argued - fallaciously - that the resolution of these two acute crises should be linked. Egypt would like to place on record its total rejection of this line of thought. Can the occupation of Kuwait be justified by Israel's occupation of other Arab territories? Are the basic rights of the Kuwaiti people any less inalienable because those of the Palestinian people have been usurped by Israel? Did Iraq invade Kuwait to liberate Palestine? If so, its army must have lost its bearings. If anything, the Iraqi invasion distracted the world's attention from the Palestinian struggle for self-determination at a crucial juncture, when the entire international community was asking Israel to arrive at a historic reconciliation with the Palestinian people. No link exists between these two issues. Each of them should be addressed and resolved on its own merits - and soon.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate that Egypt has followed with grave concern the introduction of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in recent years. The ominous implications of this development should not be underestimated.

(Mr. Moussa, Egypt)

President Mubarak in April of this year suggested that the States of the region should declare it a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, with reciprocal commitments and effective verification measures. It is our firm position that the question of weapons of mass destruction is essentially a regional concern which should entail obligations for all States of the region, without exception, that possess nuclear, chemical or any other kind of lethal weapons. We intend to pursue this issue at an appropriate time in the forums in which the security concerns of the States of the region, as well as international peace and security, can be most effectively dealt with.

Let me emphasize in this regard that no State in the Middle East will find security in arms. No State will find its own fulfilment at the expense of that of others. The States and people of the region - including Israelis and Palestinians - should once and for all faithfully commit themselves to peaceful coexistence as equals.

True security in the Middle East will be achieved only when the States of the region scrupulously abide by the norms of international law and pursue their relations in a manner consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The role of the United Nations is paramount in peace-keeping and in peace-making in regard both to the Iraqi-Kuwaiti problem and to the Israeli-Palestinian question.

What is required for the establishment of a just peace is sound co-operation, not simply coexistence, so that the people of the area will be able to enjoy the fruits of development and prosperity.

Mr. MAVROMMATIS (Cyprus): The situation in the Middle East unfortunately remains one of the major problems defying the peace epidemic that the wind of change, conciliation and non-confrontation has been spreading throughout the world. It has remained frustratingly unaffected by the lessening of international tensions and continues to pose a direct threat to international peace and security.

No matter how one may choose to view the situation, the fact remains that the core of the Middle East problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict is the question of Palestine, a grievous issue that permeates the entire political spectrum of the Middle East and will continue to do so for as long as it remains unresolved. Characteristically, even in the case of the Gulf crisis, which is a most serious problem in itself, attempts have been made by Iraq to relate the two problems to the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait - a demand made unanimously by the entire world community, as the relevant Security Council resolutions show.

Cyprus, because of its friendly relations with all the parties suffering as a result of the continuation of the crisis, and because of its traditions and proximity to and deep concern for the security of the region and of mankind, follows with special interest and particular preoccupation the continuing drama in our area, always aware of the common destiny that binds us to our neighbours.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate once again our deep concern not only at the lack of progress towards a solution, but also at the fact - which is even more disturbing - that if anything the situation is worsening. The Israeli practices in the occupied Arab territories and the, to say the least, harsh measures of the Israeli authorities against the heroic intifadah of the Palestinian people are further aggravating the situation.

(Mr. Mavrommatis, Cyprus)

It is indeed regrettable that, after so many decades during which this body has been seized of the situation and despite the numerous resolutions adopted, it has not been possible to deal with the root causes of the problem that has been causing such human suffering. Furthermore, our failure to achieve a comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem poses a real threat to the entire world, in view of the high political and economic stakes involved. Behaving like ostriches and burying our heads in the sand will not make the problem go away; it is there and awaits positive and concrete action to resolve it.

We do not have to look very far for the fundamental elements for the resolution of the problem. This body has repeatedly dealt with the issue and has quite clearly indicated through its relevant resolutions all the elements that are essential if any just and viable solution is to be achieved.

On the core issue of the Palestinian question, it is essential for the Israeli troops to withdraw from all occupied territories, to respect the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to return to their homes and lands, and to recognize fully their right to self-determination, including the right to form their own State. Furthermore, in connection with the need for a just solution, I wish to reiterate my country's support for resolution 44/42, which, inter alia, calls for the convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all the parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council. We also find ourselves in full agreement with the principles for the achievement of comprehensive peace enunciated in paragraph 3 of resolution 45/68, adopted last Thursday by the General Assembly.

In this connection, I should like to highlight the following three essential points from resolution 45/68: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian

(Mr. Mavrommatis, Cyprus)

territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; the guarantee of arrangements for the security of all States in the region, including those named in resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the dismantling of the Israeli settlements in the territories occupied since 1967.

Finally, on the Palestinian question, we wish to reiterate our support for Security Council resolution 672 (1990), in which the Council expressed its alarm at the violence that took place on 8 October in Jerusalem and led to numerous Palestinian deaths and injuries.

Although at the beginning of my statement I stressed that the Palestinian question is the core of the Middle East problem, that does not mean that the problem's other facets are not as pressing and serious. The situation - or, more accurately, the tragedy - in Lebanon is itself another offshoot of the Middle East problem. Lebanon's just struggle for the preservation of its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity is very close and dear to the hearts of our people, and the immediate restoration of that country's rights is strongly supported by the Government of Cyprus. Cyprus, throughout the crisis in Lebanon, has opened its doors to and assisted all Lebanese to the best of its abilities.

The question of the Israeli occupation of and practices in southern Lebanon should also be addressed by giving effect to the will of the international community as expressed in Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 425 (1978), 508 (1982) and 509 (1982), which call for the full and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from Lebanese territory and ask that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon be enabled to carry out in full the task entrusted to it by deploying up to the internationally recognized boundaries, ensuring peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon to extend its authority and sovereignty over all of its territory.

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We have been greatly encouraged by recent events in Lebanon, which have permitted the legitimate Government to extend and assert its authority and to dismantle barriers in Beirut, as we hope it will be able to do very soon all over Lebanon. We rejoice with the Lebanese and wish the Government of President Harawi every success, in the full knowledge that our Lebanese brethren, so well known for their ability, creativity and progressive spirit, will soon repair the ruins and bring back the Lebanon we all knew and loved.

We have stressed time and again that we consider the annexation of foreign lands unacceptable and inadmissible. The relevant United Nations resolutions in this regard demanding the withdrawal of Israel from all territories acquired by force since 1967 must be implemented if a just and peaceful solution to the problem is to be found. Consequently, the occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Arab Jerusalem, parts of Lebanon and the Golan Heights - an inseparable part of Syria, a country with which we have the best of relations and whose role in the quest for a solution to the Middle East problem is singularly important - must be terminated and the policy of land usurpation must at long last come to an end.

We have always subscribed to the principle that the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries should be safeguarded and that the international community cannot and must not compromise its principles in cases of faits accomplis, aggression and occupation. It must finally be understood and appreciated that security cannot depend on force, repression, domination or occupation. It should be realized by now that recourse to violence is not an option and that the only viable alternative for the survival of mankind is good-neighbourliness, the peaceful settlement of disputes and, as in the case of the Gulf crisis, of implementation of mandatory United Nations resolutions and decisions.

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil): Once again the States Members of the United Nations must assemble in this Hall to consider the situation in the Middle East, which remains the single most intractable source of conflict in the contemporary world. At a time when rivalries and long-standing ideological confrontation are being swept from the international scene, possibly heralding a new age, the Middle East remains a challenge to the ability of the international community to settle international conflicts in a just manner. Indeed, it would be hard to conceive of a new international order of peace and security for all without a just and effective solution to the situation in the Middle East.

The Secretary-General in his report on the subject stated:

"the Middle East as a whole continues to be the most explosive region in the world today. Long-standing grievances, which have festered for years, have been aggravated by an escalating arms race throughout the area, which has spawned a deadly arsenal of weapons of mass destruction." (A/45/726, para. 29)

Brazil remains convinced that no solution to the situation in the Middle East is possible if the various aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the heart of which is the question of Palestine, are not effectively addressed, on a priority basis. Since the outbreak in December 1987 of the Palestinian intifadah, we have had proof, if any were needed, that the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs to self-determination and nationhood cannot be quelled.

The continued policy of repression pursued by Israel in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories is doomed to failure, for it runs counter to Israel's avowed objective of maintaining law and order and the security of the State of Israel itself. Other paths leading to a peaceful solution to the present crisis will have to be taken.

It is the view of the Government of Brazil that only a peaceful, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine can offer hope for restoring peace

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and stability to the region as a whole. That settlement should be sought on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. First and foremost this would mean the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, as well as recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to exist within internationally recognized boundaries.

Secondly, Brazil is of the view that negotiations would have to be undertaken that would permit the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all the parties involved, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing, with a view to reaching a permanent settlement.

There is no more pressing task at hand than that of creating the political conditions for such a peaceful settlement to materialize. As a first step, it is incumbent upon the international community to take urgent steps to ensure the safety of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories and the effective enjoyment of their inalienable human rights.

In this regard it bears repeating that Israel, as the occupying Power, must accept the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967. New proposals have come to light whose implementation could help to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people. Whatever means are ultimately found, Brazil believes that they must be seen as a positive but temporary measure to be put in place pending the kind of just and lasting solution the question of Palestine requires.

Seldom in the history of the United Nations has a regional crisis commanded such prolonged and concentrated attention as the current situation in the region

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of the Gulf. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 660 (1990) on 2 August last, the eyes of the world have turned not only to the region itself but to the Organization, in anxious expectation of each new decision taken by the United Nations in response to the unfolding crisis.

The Government of Brazil is guided in its foreign relations by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and consequently condemns the use of force as a means for the solution of international controversies. It has unequivocally repudiated the invasion and continued occupation of Kuwait and lent its full support to the resolutions adopted by the Security Council. It is of paramount importance that the international community make it known that it is united in its goal of ensuring that those resolutions are fully complied with.

In that regard Brazil favours the peaceful settlement of disputes and considers that force may only be used strictly within the confines of the relevant provisions of the Charter - that is, if and when all diplomatic options have been duly explored and peaceful remedies exhausted.

Brazil deems it necessary that all diplomatic means be actively pursued with a view to securing a peaceful solution. My Government is ready to lend its support to efforts to achieve that end. Notwithstanding other options that might be available, it would be worth while now to consider bolstering the Secretary-General's role in the promotion of a peaceful solution, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The Brazilian Government has strictly complied with all the relevant Security Council resolutions and has collaborated fully with the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) to monitor compliance with the sanctions. Brazil has incurred considerable economic losses as a result not only of the higher prices of imported oil but also of the interruption of trade and the suspension of

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payments-in-arrears owed to Brazil. Needless to say, the losses that have been incurred have been compounded by the fact that they represent an obstacle to the implementation of the economic adjustment programme recently adopted by Brazil.

A word must be said concerning the continuing tragedy of Lebanon, a nation to which Brazil is linked by strong ties of friendship. It is to be hoped that recent events hold out the promise of a solution to the conflict in Lebanon and of an end to foreign intervention and to the long suffering of the Lebanese people. The restoration of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon in the context of a process of national reconciliation is an objective that might now realistically be pursued. Peace in Lebanon could indeed be within reach.

Allow me to conclude by recalling the commitment of Brazil to the United Nations as the principal international mechanism for the settlement of disputes on the basis of justice and equity. The capacity of the United Nations to act as a centre for agreement and decision on matters of global importance will be put to the test again and again in the coming years, as it has been in regard to the tragic conflicts in the Middle East that have involved the Organization almost since its inception.

The General Assembly has a very important and even crucial role to play in this respect as a forum where the views and concerns of the membership at large are expressed in a democratic manner. It is time for dialogue and negotiation to prevail and for the parties concerned to acknowledge that now, more than ever before, the credibility of their avowed commitment to peace is at stake.

Mr. KUKAN (Czechoslovakia): A disturbing, even volatile, situation has persisted in the Middle East for decades. The existence of a series of long-unresolved disputes has led to deep instability in the whole region and has increased the tendency to seek solutions based on force. We must state openly that developments in that part of the world are obviously in contradiction with the current positive trends in international relations and are a source of concern and disappointment to us.

Hopefully, there is a general understanding that there can be no alleviation of the Middle East situation unless the Arab-Israeli dispute is settled and the Palestinian question resolved once and for all. It is precisely in this sphere that it is obvious that no progress has been made.

Even worse, discussions during the current session of the General Assembly on items relating to the situation in the Middle East, in particular the question of Palestine, have so far revealed such a divergence of views between the parties most concerned - Israel, the Arab countries and the Palestinians - that no solution is in sight. Without sufficient political good will on the part of the parties most involved in the conflict it will not be possible to find a way out of this blind alley.

That is why we should like to make an urgent appeal from this rostrum, to those parties to show the resolve to overcome disagreements and mutual mistrust, with a view to reaching a historic compromise. Each side must start to express an understanding of the natural and legitimate concerns of the other.

Israel has an indisputable right to peaceful existence within internationally recognized and fully guaranteed boundaries. In our opinion, respect for this right is one of the basic prerequisites for a settlement in the Middle East. From that point of view, it is encouraging that the Palestine National Council, in 1988,

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accepted Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) renounced terrorism. It is desirable that this gesture be fully translated into everyday practice. It would undoubtedly be helpful if the PLO were to make a real effort to stop the use of force against Jews in Israel, in the occupied territories and elsewhere in the world. Even at this session of the General Assembly we have heard some Arab countries refer to Israel as the "Zionist entity". That does not indicate any kind of recognition of Israel's existence as a State.

Israel's proposal to hold elections in the occupied territories was a step in the right direction. It could be an important step in the peace process, provided that the elections were part of a comprehensive settlement process, that the areas in which they were held included East Jerusalem, and that there were appropriate guarantees of freedom.

Recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinians to self-determination, with all that this implies, is as much a basic condition for a Middle East settlement as is recognition of the right of all States in the area, including Israel, to exist.

Much as we appreciate Israel's proposal that elections be held in the occupied territories, we should like to see a change in its position on the inclusion of the PLO in peace talks. Without the PLO, which has great influence among the Palestinians, it will not be possible to achieve a solution to the Palestinian problem.

The breaking of the vicious circle of violence in the Middle East is a task which must be undertaken seriously and which, if accomplished, will lead to the elimination of mutual mistrust. In this context, the bloody events that took place in Jerusalem on 8 October 1990 were very unfortunate. During the Special Political

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Committee's consideration of agenda item 75 - Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices in the Occupied Territories - the representative of Czechoslovakia, through a statement by the spokesman of its Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested against the brutal action of the Israeli order-enforcement troops who bear moral responsibility for the loss of life among Palestinians. We fully endorse Security Council resolutions 672 (1990) and 673 (1990) on this issue.

In my country's view, a peaceful settlement in the Middle East should be achieved through the convening, at an appropriate time, of an international peace conference under United Nations auspices. However, we would not hesitate to support any other constructive proposals conducive to a settlement that would be acceptable to all the parties concerned with the Middle East crisis.

We welcome the latest development in Lebanon, which gives us hope that a solution will be found to the long-drawn-out conflict in that country.

The crisis in the Persian Gulf has had an extremely negative effect on the situation in the Middle East. The development of events in the context of Iraq's aggression against a sovereign and independent neighbouring State has demonstrated how fragile, in that part of the world, is the borderline between peace and war. At the same time, an unprecedented arsenal of weapons is concentrated in the area. The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic resolutely supports the Security Council's decisions, including its last resolution - 678 (1990) - aimed at solving the crisis in the Persian Gulf. The aggressor must not win the race against time. The aggressor must end its illegal occupation of Kuwait. That is the only acceptable course.

Like other hotbeds of tension in the world, the situation in the Middle East was influenced by the cold war. Pursuit of the objectives of power politics by

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stirring up hostility and malice where there were regional conflicts led to death and to hardship and suffering among innocent people. We believe that such behaviour should now be a thing of the past

The approach of the former Czechoslovak régime - the totalitarian régime - to regional conflicts, including the one in the Middle East, was stigmatized by cold-war-mongering and one-sidedness. All of this ran counter to the genuine interests of the Czech and Slovak people. But we too bear part of the blame. That is exactly why we offer our country as the venue for negotiations about regional conflicts. President Vaclav Havel, in his talks with Mr. Yasser Arafat and with the Israeli leaders during his visit to Israel, expressed the readiness of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic to provide facilities for Palestinian-Israeli dialogue.

We think that the entire international community, and this Organization in particular, has a moral duty to push seriously for a radical breakthrough towards peace in the Middle East. This should be reflected in well-balanced and realistic language in resolutions and other documents and in their content. This is the direction in which we in the United Nations should proceed.

Mr. ZAKARI (Nigeria): Last year when the Nigerian delegation participated in the debate on the agenda item now before the Assembly it was with great disillusionment but also with heightened hopes and expectations. Our disillusionment at that time derived from the painful reminders of missed opportunities, failures of political will, and past policies. It is depressing that this year again we continue to grapple with the full impact of the cycle of protest and violence, deprivation, fear, hatred, mistrust and death.

Yet this year, like last year - and perhaps even more than last year - we see an extraordinary conjunction of factors and events that could make a settlement possible in the Middle East. The outlines of a new world order marked by true interdependence and co-operation are slowly emerging. Swords are being turned into ploughshares, as yesterday's enemies have become friends and collaborators. The Middle East should not be immune from the prospects of a peaceful resolution of regional conflicts. Therefore, as our world grapples with a transformation of major proportions on our planet, opportunities now present themselves for moving the Arab-Israeli conflict to the stage of resolution and thus for rescuing and rekindling peace and stability in the Middle East region - something for which we have long hoped.

Other representatives before me have referred to these unique opportunities. But they have also spoken of the litany of broken promises and of the regrettable recoiling from a major decision to confront the problem in the region. The Nigerian delegation joins them in reminding the Assembly of the consequences for the emerging world order of the blatant and continued thwarting of the will of the international community, as expressed in the numerous resolutions of this body, by one of the principal parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The debate earlier on the question of Palestine once again unmasked the prevalence of man's base instincts in the Middle East: the mindless violence and

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the loss of many lives, the deprivation, torture and collective punishment, and the desecration of holy places - the principal victims being hapless, innocent Palestinians. This has taken place in contemptuous disregard of the decisions of the Assembly as well as the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Thus the time-tested principles of the Charter of the Organization, which have been a beacon of hope to many subject peoples and a source of solace to small States, have all been treated with disdain by a Member of the Assembly.

We do not accept that the Palestinian people are less deserving of the protection and the high moral values of this Organization. And we are gravely concerned at the cynical application of a different scale of values to their plight by Israel and its supporters. Indeed, the Nigerian delegation has been left to wonder what the reaction would be, what solutions would be canvassed and supported, were the scales to be reversed? My delegation considers the persistence of this pattern of behaviour to be most unhelpful to the search for a lasting and just settlement of the Middle Eastern conflict.

The foregoing provides a useful backdrop to my delegation's appreciation of the reports of the Secretary-General in documents A/45/595, A/45/709 and A/45/726. Those reports underscore the current stumbling-blocks to a settlement but also point to the opportunities for a lasting peace. The problems continue to centre on Israeli non-recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and the exercise of that right, as for all peoples, in a clearly defined State of their own. Israel's non-acceptance of a two-State solution based on General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947 and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and its lack of genuine commitment to respect, in word and in deed, international law and conventions, particularly those relating to the treatment of Palestinians, continue to retard the prospects for peace in the Middle East.

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The positive principles on which the Assembly has pronounced itself so clearly in the past, notably the unimpeded right of self-determination, have again this year been positively reaffirmed in speeches by delegations in the course of this debate. We therefore are pleased to associate ourselves with this broad section of mankind, for which the self-determination of the Palestinians outweigh the temporary strategic and political advantages of power politics. The Nigerian delegation could not do otherwise, conscious as it is of the deleterious impact of the denial of such rights on post-colonial independent life on the African continent. That is why we remain firm in our conviction that the decisions of the Assembly and of the Security Council on the Middle East situation should not be lightly dismissed or selectively enforced. They do represent the clearest expression of our common humanity.

It is convenient to pretend, in the light of the current juxtaposition of forces in the region, that the Middle East problem will disappear under the weight of persistent denials of Palestinian rights and the frustration of the will of the Assembly. The fact is that it will not. The reality of the Palestinian situation must be confronted and addressed, as no people fighting for its inalienable rights has ever lost the struggle against its oppressors. In the same vein, the temporary shift of the glare of international publicity to events in other parts of the region cannot rob the Palestinian problem of its importance for a world yearning for peace. There is an urgent need, therefore, to redress this long-standing injustice and inequity against the Palestinian people.

My delegation is aware that such a solution would demand a significant leap towards the future, across the present chasm of hatred and violence. To insist on bilateral, face-to-face negotiations in a situation where suspicions are deep, fear pervasive and distrust mutual is to continue to tread a beaten path. It should

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not be a convenient excuse for commitment to a peace process under the United Nations that could help bridge the gap between the two sides, restore confidence and guarantee an equitable settlement. This requires the will to resist short-term solutions and temporary expediencies that pander to sectionalist sentiments and group interest. It requires, moreover, statesmanship. Happily, these qualities are not lacking in the Middle East; they deserve to be encouraged and sustained by the collective decisions of the General Assembly.

Another important prerequisite is the unambiguous affirmation of the primacy of international law in relations in the region. The selective application of this principle would not generate confidence. The continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands since 1967 represents an affront to international law and a major obstacle to peace. It cannot be justified on any pretext, including a deliberate policy of resettlement of immigrants in the occupied Arab lands. It is time that the illegal Israeli occupation of the occupied territories was ended. Prudence and equity would not dictate otherwise.

I have already referred to the opportunities that now exist for a settlement. My delegation believes that the inclination to pursue a settlement has never been stronger than now. However, for such a settlement to be lasting it must be comprehensive and must address all the issues involved. We are convinced that an international conference on the Middle East brokered by the United Nations and involving all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and the five permanent members of the Security Council, would provide the most suitable mechanism for such a settlement.

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We therefore, once again, call on Israel and its supporters to facilitate such a conference. It would be a major setback if one of the parties were to persist in distrust and cynicism towards this world body at a time of renewed confidence in its efficacy and in the capabilities of our Secretary-General.

Developments in Lebanon offer yet another hope for peace in the region. They constitute an acid test of the readiness of all parties to agree to a solution. We appeal for Lebanon to be helped to consolidate its sovereignty and maintain its territorial integrity, thereby assuring the healing process on which the present Government has embarked.

We are indeed at the threshold of a new age, an age of peace and stability, a new order, a new millennium. The old world is giving way to the new, and so we are challenged to bury old ways, old policies, old thoughts. There is urgency in the times, and opportunities are beckoning. We must demonstrate the will and the capacity to embrace new solutions, in the conviction that we do indeed live in a global village where peace is indivisible, freedom our common patrimony.

It is a matter of urgency that the political time-bomb now slowly ticking away in the Middle East should be defused; a conjunction of factors, most especially the chance that the Palestinian people will have their human dignity and their homeland restored to them, now makes this a distinct possibility. It is time to exorcize the ghost of the unpleasant past and so create a haven of peace and stability, of interdependency and mutual accommodation, in the Middle East.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.